

that they would address some of the questions that have oppressed their citizens for years.

□ 1630

After the Vietnam War, we remain with a divided Vietnam, the North and South Vietnam; but over the years, this Congress and these administrations have moved more closely to try to develop alliances with the United States and North and South Vietnam, under the argument that engagement is responsible and it helps to promote democracy.

I would say that many of the Vietnamese in the Vietnamese community of the United States know that that is still a difficult road. Many are still fighting for family reunification, for the right to visit their families, or the right for their families to be reunited with them. Even though we move closer and closer to trade relationships, we still have harsh conditions in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and that has to do with the ongoing fight for confiscated and personal property that has not been returned.

Unfortunately, as the one-party system was established under the Vietnamese Communist Party, uncompensated confiscation of real and personal property from Vietnamese citizens was widespread and there was no solution. Unfortunately, under this government the confiscation of land as a tool of repression against certain ethnic minorities continued, and it continues even today. Article 23 of the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam provides that the lawful property of individuals and organizations shall not be nationalized.

So I rise today to ask that more attention be given to the providing of this property back to the rightful owners and that the government is asked by the world community to establish a private land use right for some of its citizens and also to establish a way to return this property. We, likewise, believe that this government should remove itself from engaging in repressive procedures that do not allow the right of private property ownership to exist in North Vietnam. We believe it is very important for tools to be put in place so that the rights of the people can be restored.

I hope in this time that the United Nations is gathered that issues dealing with individual rights of citizens and countries that are still repressive become high on their agenda. We need to discuss Sudan. We need to discuss the rights of the people in Iran, and, certainly, Vietnam is one in particular.

So I join in support of H. Res. 415 and ask this Congress to support a strong statement being made to North Vietnam about the rights of its people and the right for the return of private and personal property. This is a time that the statement should be made, but more importantly, this is a time for action.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 415, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

REQUESTING THE PRESIDENT TO ISSUE A PROCLAMATION CALLING FOR OBSERVANCE OF GLOBAL FAMILY DAY, ONE DAY OF PEACE AND SHARING

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Con. Res. 317) requesting the President to issue a proclamation annually calling upon the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 317

Whereas, in the year 2005, the people of the world suffered many calamitous events, including devastation from tsunamis, terror attacks, war, famine, genocide, hurricanes, earthquakes, political and religious conflict, disease, poverty, and rioting, all necessitating global cooperation, compassion, and unity previously unprecedented among diverse cultures, faiths, and economic classes;

Whereas grave global challenges in the year 2006 may require cooperation and innovative problem-solving among citizens and nations on an even greater scale;

Whereas, on December 15, 2000, Congress adopted Senate Concurrent Resolution 138, expressing the sense of Congress that the President of the United States should issue a proclamation each year calling upon the people of the United States and interested organizations to observe an international day of peace and sharing at the beginning of each year;

Whereas, in 2001, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 56/2, which invited "Member States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and all the peoples of the world to celebrate One Day in Peace, 1 January 2002, and every year thereafter";

Whereas many foreign heads of state have recognized the importance of establishing Global Family Day, a special day of international unity, peace, and sharing, on the first day of each year; and

Whereas family is the basic structure of humanity, thus, we must all look to the stability and love within our individual families to create stability in the global community: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress urgently requests the following:

(1) That the President issue a proclamation annually calling upon the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing, a day which is dedicated—

(A) to eradicating violence, hunger, poverty, and suffering; and

(B) to establishing greater trust and fellowship among peace-loving nations and families everywhere.

(2) That the President invite former Presidents of the United States, Nobel laureates, and other notables, including American business, labor, faith, and civic leaders, to join the President in promoting appropriate activities for Americans and in extending appropriate greetings from the families of America to families in the rest of the world.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on the resolution under consideration and to include extraneous material.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of House Con. Res. 317, requesting the President to issue a proclamation setting aside a day dedicated to eradicating violence and establishing greater trust among peace-loving nations and families everywhere.

This resolution has a distinguished history, Madam Speaker. In the year 2000, Congress unanimously agreed to a similar resolution. The previous legislation, authored by the late Senator Paul Wellstone from Minnesota, expressed the sense of Congress that a day of peace and sharing should be established at the beginning of each year. This day would encourage people around the world to gather with family, their faith community, and neighbors to share a meal and to pledge to work for peace in the new year. It called upon Americans to match or multiply the cost of that year's meal with a contribution to fight hunger.

In the following year, 2001, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution asking the global community to set aside the first day of the year to recognize the importance of international unity, peace, and sharing.

Today, Madam Speaker, we are considering House Concurrent Resolution 317, sponsored by my colleague Congressman CONYERS, recognizing that in order to implement these resolutions calling for peace and the alleviation of worldwide suffering, we must rely heavily on the family. It is the family that is the basic unit of a civil society. The family is where our values are learned and carried out. Stability and peace in the global community can only be accomplished one family at a time.

A special day where families worldwide can sit down to a meal and pledge

to work locally for peace and to end injustice in their own communities will no doubt have a worldwide impact.

I urge an "aye" vote, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution.

I would first like to commend my good friend and distinguished colleague, the ranking member of our Judiciary Committee, JOHN CONYERS, for introducing this resolution and for advocating on behalf of Global Family Day for many years. I would also like to thank Chairman HYDE for allowing this resolution to move to the floor.

Madam Speaker, this resolution is very simple and very important. It provides that the Nation should set aside time dedicated to eradicating violence, hunger, and poverty, and to establishing greater trust and fellowship among peace-loving nations and families everywhere.

As we commemorate the lives lost in the tragedy that occurred on September 11, 5 years ago, it is particularly fitting that the President designate a day for eradicating violence and embracing our common humanity.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to yield such time as he may consume to the author of this resolution, my good friend and distinguished colleague from Michigan, Congressman CONYERS.

Mr. CONYERS. Madam Speaker, I rise absolutely overjoyed at the action that has been taken by the Committee on International Relations. I begin by commending the distinguished chairman, HENRY HYDE, a current member of the House Judiciary Committee, where he was once chairman; my dear friend from Florida, Subcommittee Chairwoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN; and, of course, the esteemed TOM LANTOS, the ranking member of the committee.

Ladies and gentlemen, I cannot tell you how thrilled I am to see a resolution come back to the floor for the observance of Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing. It has a long history that the gentlewoman from Florida remembers all the way back to the late Senator Paul Wellstone. And I join all of you as we in the Congress continue to search for a way to find peace in Iraq and Afghanistan, in every corner of the world.

There are widely divergent views about how we arrive at peace; but most of all, we are deeply concerned about the subject. We have families, constituents, individuals who are longing for peace in the world and an end to the

suffering caused by poverty, disease, and hunger. Untold numbers of our friends, neighbors, parents, children are hoping that there can be more understanding, more generosity, more genuine friendship and more caring among people of all faiths and cultures. We struggle with military strategies and budgets, economic considerations, and international issues.

But there is one matter which we can come together on, and this is House Concurrent Resolution 317 that calls upon the President to issue an annual proclamation calling upon the Nation's citizens to observe Global Family Day. It has been done before in the year 2000, and we are so pleased that it is being done today.

I would remind you that in 2001 following the tragedy of 9/11, the United Nations General Assembly took the same action. In more than 20 nations around the globe, the leaders of those countries have personally endorsed this initiative. And here in the Nation's capital, Mayor Anthony Williams proclaimed just 2 months ago that January 1, 2007, would be a day for all Washingtonians to become peacemakers in whatever capacity that they can.

Frequently, this took the role of people breaking bread with someone, some family of another faith, of another community, and the idea was to get to know one another better. It provides a way of saying to the world that we understand that it is the individuals, the 6.6 billion people on this planet, interacting with one another that will allow this to happen.

So I thank the tireless advocates who have worked on this matter across the years. Organizationally, they include the Martin Luther King, Jr. Family Life Institute, the National Association of Former Foster Care Children of America, the Global Family Day Foundation; but, of course, it is the founder of this idea that came to us in the Congress years ago with young children who wanted to start doing something along with the former Senator from Minnesota, and that is Ms. Linda Grover, whose dedication and commitment has inspired all of us to this unique, creative way to bring us all a little closer together.

Again, my thanks to the floor leaders that have managed this.

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. CONYERS. I yield to the gentleman from Ohio.

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his work on this resolution, and I ask the gentleman with his consent that I could be added as an original cosponsor.

Mr. CONYERS. Yes. I thought that he was, but if he wasn't, he is now.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 4½ minutes to my friend and colleague from Texas, SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, let me thank my distinguished friend from California for yielding and his leadership, as well as my friend from Texas. Most of all, let me offer my great appreciation for Congressman CONYERS and his service and his commitment and years of working on human rights and justice issues in the United States and his collaboration on this legislation. I thank him for allowing me to be an original cosponsor for something as instructive and as insightful as this legislation is. I am delighted to be joined with a number of cosponsors now, Mr. KUCINICH as well.

And I rise today to applaud the concept, but also to say how vital and how important this idea is. We celebrate Thanksgiving and holidays around the Christmastime. Many of the different faiths call that timeframe in their own faith a name. We have commemorations around the birth of Christ for Christians, and other faiths have their commemorations. We are eager to promote peace, as I am an original cosponsor of the Department of Peace, offered by my good friend from Ohio, Mr. KUCINICH. But I do not know if we realize how crucial it is in this day and time to have a Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing.

□ 1645

Maybe if you would take a journey with me back to New Orleans, reminiscing and remembering the horrificness of Hurricane Katrina and the time we spent just a few weeks ago, some 28 Democratic Members who traveled throughout the gulf region. We really went to see the improvement, to be able to shake hands and to see where people had moved from the devastation of 2005. But yet we found ongoing devastation.

We bent down and we offered prayers as well as action. And it made me think more and more that we needed to be able to come together as families to address the question of hurricanes and earthquakes, famine and genocide. Because right here in the United States in the gulf region, there are still people who are homeless, not because they are not Americans who have contributed to this country, and veterans and people who have built their homes and raised their families, but because this government has failed to provide them with the resources necessary to go back to their homes, private insurance companies have not been able to provide them with relief to build their homes.

So this day is a broader concept of being able to bring us together, not to forget those who are now hopeless sometimes and helpless, but to be able to say that we want to reunite families.

Then I want you to think of the child soldiers around the world. I thought maybe we had extinguished that. I offered legislation early in my career

about the elimination or the lack of use of child soldiers by cutting some of the foreign relations funding. But yet child soldiers exist. They are still fighting in guerilla warfares around the world. Children who are barely 8 years old, 7 years old, 12 years old have their limbs eliminated because they are now in guerilla warfare. We need this Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing.

Then, of course, the crisis in Sudan. I am asking the President, as he interacts with, again, the nation of families, to demand that the President of Sudan step aside to allow the African Union peace keepers to enter into their territory, to prevent the famine, the genocide, the brutality, the violence, the violence against women.

For those of us who have been in the Sudan, who have been in Chad where the refugees are, the stories are horrific. If you sit down on the dirt floor as I have done with the women of Sudan to tell you about how they are raped continuously when they simply go out to get wood, in order to provide fire in order to survive. This is a time now that the United Nations when the President can demand, along with the General Assembly and the U.N. Security Council for the Sudan to step aside and the world family to condemn them.

And so this Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing that the President should call for the United States, should be that we pray for the peace and human rights of the people of Iran, for the troops to come home so that they can be redeployed out of Iraq, and that the Iraqi Government can take their rightful place of leadership.

We pray for those in the gulf region who are now suffering. This resolution is so crucial, so vital, so important, because it is a day of action, because it is calling for action. All of us who are comfortable in our homes right now need to be aware that the world is in trouble.

But the United States, taking the high moral ground, has the opportunity, based upon this wonderful resolution, to be instructive and to gather its people around to ask for the freedom and peace and justice of the people in Sudan, freedom and human rights, and a new day in Iran and a standing down of any military violence by the United States against Iran.

And, as well, the redeployment of our troops out of Iraq, and the governance of the people of Iraq so that we can promote this Global Day of Peace and Sharing.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 317: Requesting the President to issue a proclamation annually calling upon the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing, and for other purposes.

Global Family Day originated from One Day Holiday, a day of peace and sharing together around the world, and is the first major shared global event to annually celebrate the entire human family, its achievements, and its aspirations.

Global Family Day is an important and necessary day set aside to represent the unity of the human family. At a time of war, hatred, poverty, and friction within our international community, Global Family Day reminds us to remain hopeful, to weather the stormy seas, to look for peace in the midst of the tempest.

We need a Global Family Day, because we are indeed in the midst of a troubling time. In the United States alone, there is plenty to remind of us of the urgency of fighting many of our social maladies.

In 2000, 16.2 percent of persons in the United States under the age of 18 were considered poor.

In that same year, 11.7 million American children younger than 18 lived below the poverty line.

One out of every six American children (16.3 percent) was poor in 2001. More specifically, 30.2 percent of African-American children, 28 percent of Hispanic children, 11.5 percent of Asian and Pacific Islander children, and 9.5 percent of Non-Hispanic White children were poor.

1 in 1.056 children will be killed by guns before the age of 20.

Children make up 12 percent of all crime victims reported to the police, including 71 percent of all sex crimes and 38 percent of all kidnapping victims.

Participation in the observance of Global Family Day is an important gesture of compassion. When we recognize Global Family Day, we support the idea of peace over war. When we recognize Global Family Day, we support the fight against poverty. When we recognize Global Family Day, we support world unity over ill-motivated antagonism.

As the leader of the free world, the United States must foster a sense of empathy, compassion, and brotherhood. We must join our brothers and sisters around the world to build hope at a time of doubt, to spread love and unity in a time of hate and division.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution requesting the President to issue a proclamation annually calling upon the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing, and other purposes.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California for this opportunity to address this resolution, which calls upon the people of the United States to observe Global Family Day, One Day of Peace and Sharing.

The prayer of Saint Francis begins with these words: make me a channel of our peace. And the gentleman from San Francisco, certainly throughout his career and here again today, affirms his work for peace. I want to join with him and the prime sponsor, Mr. CONYERS, in requesting the President to issue this annual proclamation.

This is an important moment when we can unite as a Congress to stand for peace. Because if we can do that for one moment, and we can advocate that it be done for a day, we know that we

have the capacity to master the social arts to the point where we can make peace a practice in our everyday lives, not just the absence of war, but the active practice of a capacity for mutuality, for understanding, for peace-giving, for peace-sharing. We have this capacity.

We showed it last week when we came together on a resolution honoring the Dalai Lama with a Congressional Gold Medal. I want to thank Mr. LANTOS for giving me the opportunity. Because of you, I had the chance to meet the Dalai Lama years ago.

We have this capacity in this Congress to bring our aspirations to the highest level possible and in that way connect with the whole world. Because what this talks about is one day around the world for peace and sharing. So we at this moment unite with a family of humanity. We at this moment stand strong on principles of human unity. We can do that in this moment, and we can do it for many other moments as well.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I thank my friend for his heartfelt and warm words. I yield 2 minutes to my distinguished colleague and very good friend from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS).

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from California for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to join with all of those who have expressed an interest and a concern in this resolution. I rise because I firmly move that we have the capacity to go far beyond where we are.

As a matter of fact, I recall John Kennedy once saying that peace is not found only in treaties, covenants and charters, but in the hearts of men.

I suspect that if he were alive today, he would say in the hearts of men and of women. I happen to believe that we learn what we live, and that if we actively pursue the concepts of peace that we find different ways to handle conflict resolution.

I know that there are people who would say, what is the point in talking about this? Well, I will tell you the point. And I want to commend the gentleman from Michigan, because I remember reading a book that said, in the beginning was the word. And, of course, the words go forth. And people internalize those words. So I am pleased to join all of those who have spoken on this issue today. I do believe that peace is possible.

Mr. LANTOS. Madam Speaker, I want to thank all of my colleagues for their very significant statements. We have no additional requests for time, and I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent

resolution, H. Con. Res. 317, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONDEMNING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAN AND EXPRESSING SOLIDARITY WITH THE IRANIAN PEOPLE

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 976) condemning human rights abuses by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and expressing solidarity with the Iranian people.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 976

Whereas the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran was elected through a controlled and fixed election process which does not allow the Iranian people to freely elect their leaders;

Whereas the Government of Iran is unaccountable to the will of the Iranian people;

Whereas the Government of Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

Whereas the Government of Iran within both its legal framework and everyday practice continues to violate the civil and human rights of its citizens, in particular women, religious and ethnic minorities, and vocal opponents of the regime;

Whereas the Government of Iran practices discrimination against the aforementioned groups through denial of access to education and employment, seizure of private property, violent suppression of peaceful protest and freedom of assembly, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and mental torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishment, such as public executions, hanging, and stoning, and extra judicial killings of dissidents and ordinary citizens;

Whereas the Constitution of Iran promotes religious intolerance and prohibits religious freedom by endorsing one religion to the exclusion of other religious beliefs;

Whereas an unelected theocratic ruler and clerical elite exert control over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Iranian Government;

Whereas the Iranian judiciary is not independent and can be subject to arbitrary dismissal by the clerics;

Whereas on December 16, 2005, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution discussing the human rights violations by the Government of Iran and insisting that Iran eliminate in law and in practice discrimination toward the aforementioned groups;

Whereas international human rights organizations have called for investigations into violent crackdowns of peaceful protests and other human rights violations which the Government of Iran has ignored;

Whereas Iran sent to the June 2006 inaugural meetings of the United Nations Human Rights Council Saeed Mortazavi, Tehran's Prosecutor General responsible for jailing hundreds of journalists and linked to the 2003

arrest, imprisonment, and murder of an Iranian-Canadian photojournalist, showing a blatant disregard for the issue of human rights reform; and

Whereas the Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices and Report on International Religious Freedom document the human rights abuses by the Government of Iran and list Iran as a "Country of Particular Concern": Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) condemns the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and strongly urges the international community to bring pressure on Iran to halt discrimination and violence toward its citizens, in particular women, religious and ethnic minorities, and vocal opponents of the regime;

(2) urges the Government of the United States to continue to pressure the Government of Iran into making measurable improvements in the human rights situation for the Iranian people; and

(3) expresses its unity with all Iranian people and shares their desire to see Iran become a free country with transparent, democratic institutions and equal rights for all.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. MCCAUL) and the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCCAUL of Texas. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of freedom for the Iranian people, and I want to thank Congressman CROWLEY and Congressman LANTOS for their efforts in support of this resolution. I want to thank Chairwoman ROS-LEHTINEN for her tireless efforts to see Iran become a free and democratic state.

For nearly 30 years, Iranians have lived under the extremist policies of religious clerics. Their human rights violations against the Iranian people defy common belief. The Iranian people deserve, indeed desire, the opportunity to live in a free and democratic society.

This is the dream of the vast majority of Iranians, and we should help them make this dream come true. It has been far too long since we have looked at the human rights record of one of the most evil regimes of the modern era. We know that Iran is the single largest state sponsor of terrorism in the world. And we know that their leaders wish to continue inflicting terrible pain and suffering on any group of people who do not share their extremist beliefs.

However, we must also remember the pain and suffering of the Iranian people

at the hands of their leaders. Congress, the President, and the international community must address the excessive human rights abuses by Iran's Government. Since the Khomeini revolution in 1979, Iran has been ruled by a string of tyrants who use religion and politics as an excuse to persecute their own people.

Religious, ethnic, and gender discrimination are practiced every day by the Iranian judicial courts and the clerics who run them. People or groups critical to their government are given few rights under the law and no rights in practice.

The Government of Iran practices discrimination against its own people by denial of access to education and employment, seizure of private property, violent suppression of peaceful protest and freedom of assembly, arbitrary arrest and detention, physical and mental torture, cruel, inhumane and degrading punishment such as public executions, hangings and stoning, and extra-judicial killings of dissidents and ordinary citizens.

Iran's clerical regime has been a serial abuser of human rights since it violently took over the country in 1979. But it is clear that since President Ahmadinejad took power, the abuse of Iranian citizens has increased. Under his rule, Iranians are tortured for simply practicing a different religion, for speaking a different idea, and even for not supporting the extremist mullahs.

The oppression of women under the Iranian regime is perhaps the most brutal and most offensive. Iranian women are not allowed to attend universities, to hold jobs, to drive a car. They are forced to cover their entire bodies in public. In many cases of rape, the accused man will not face any punishment, and the woman in question will be accused of fornication, will be imprisoned, and eventually put to death.

One case involved a young woman who was deeply in love with her husband, and without evidence or reason, and against the pleas of her own husband, was found guilty of adultery. She was buried alive up to her chest in Tehran and then stoned to death.

In other cases of abuse, people have been arrested, beaten, and even killed for eating during the month of Ramadan, or doing anything that the mullahs deemed inappropriate. According to Iranian law, the religious police can interrogate a suspect without a lawyer present, which allows them to beat prisoners until they confess, most often to a crime that they did not commit.

□ 1700

We must never forget these violations when we consider Iran's place in the international community. President Bush has attempted to engage the Iranian Government to end their illegal nuclear weapons program. This effort is crucial to keeping the world safe from a nuclear nightmare.